Haig Quizzing on Richardson Sought

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ELLIOT L. RICHARDSON
. . . accused by Haig

By Spencer Rich
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Half the members of the Senate Judiciary Committee said yesterday they favor asking White House aide Alexander Haig Jr. to testify on his charge that Elliot L. Richardson didn't tell the committee the truth about why he quit as attorney general.

In interviews with 13 of the committee's 16 members, eight said they would back a proposal for hearings to explore Haig's charges. Sen. Charles McC. Mathias (R-Md.) will present the plan to an executive session of the committee today. A ninth member, Sen. John L. McClelland (D-Ark.), hinted that he might go along but didn't commit himself. Four Republicans were reluctant.

The Haig charge against Richardson was made last Wednesday night when the President, accompanied by Haig and several others, met with about 15 senators to discuss the Watergate issue, the President's firing of Watergate Special Prosecutor Archibald Cox, and the resignation of Richardson.

At that time Haig, backed by the President, told the senators that Richardson had actually dreamed up the idea of forbidding Cox as special prosecutor to seek new presidential documents through the courts. This contradicted testimony to the Judiciary Committee by Richardson that he had never agreed to such a prohibition.

Richardson had further stated that when Cox was fired for refusing to agree to such a prohibition, Richardson felt he had to resign.

When Haig, at the Wednesday meeting, was reminded by Mathias that Richardson had testified under oath that he never agreed to prohibiting Cox from seeking presidential documents through the courts, Haig responded, "I have read Elliot's testimony and it is not true."

Mathias said yesterday that such a grave charge against Richardson—in effect, of lying to the committee—needed to be examined by "testimony from the people who apparently have

See DISPUTE, A8, Col. 5

Salute to Ted Agnew Night Committee is fined $2,000 in Maryland. See A7.

DISPUTE, From A1

first-hand information—Haig, Leonard Garment, J. Fred Buzhardt and Charles Alan Wright." (All are White House aides.) "The committee has got to look into it," Mathias said.

At least seven other committee members said they will back the Mathias proposal. If all 16 vote, nine must back it to order the hearings.

"I would favor getting Richardson and Haig up," said John V. Tunney (D-Calif.). "If Haig claimed executive privilege" and declined to appear, Tunney said, "that would answer the question pretty clearly."

Sen. Quentin N. Burdick (D-N.D.) said, "I would go along with it. Haig testimony? Depending on what Richardson said."

Sen. Sam J. Ervin Jr. (D-N.C.) said, "I would favor investigating it and calling Haig. There's no executive

PHILIP KURLAND
. . . sees evasion

privilege, because this (the charge by Haig) occurred in a public meeting. There's no excuse for calling it a confidential communication."

Majority Whip Robert C. Byrd (D-W.Va.) said, "I agree. Let's get Haig and get his statements under oath."

Sens. Philip A. Hart (D-Mich.) and Birch Bayh (D-Ind.) both said the committee should seek to resolve the dispute and find out the truth. An aide to Edward M. Kennedy (D-Mass.) also said the senator supports the Mathias proposal.

McClellan, who declined to commit himself specifically, appeared receptive to the idea. "I don't care who they have up," he said. "If anybody here wants to hear anything useful, they can have him . . . I don't know how I'd vote, but generally when people want hearings like that, I say let them go ahead."

Republicans on the committee, other than Mathias, were unfavorable or noncommittal.

"I really feel it's up to them (Richardson and Haig whether they feel it's necessary for them to come up," said GOP Senate Leader Hugh Scott (Pa.).

Marlow W. Cook (R-Ky.) said, "I don't know what I'd do. We can spend all our time on Haig and all our time on Richardson and not get through with the problems we've got to face."

Edward J. Gurney (R-Fla.) said, "I don't want to get into that imbroglio until we take it up."

Roman L. Hruska (R-Neb.), senior Republican on the committee, was noncommittal, merely saying, "We expect to discuss it" at the committee's executive session.

Some of the Republican leaders on Capitol Hill are known to be unhappy with the accusations against Richardson, and have cautioned the White House that a "credibility contest" between the President's aides and Richardson could only contribute to disunity.